CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Flathead Electric Cooperative 1785 Talbot Road Guywire Project
Proposed Implementation Date:	May, 2009
Proponent:	Flathead Electric Cooperative
Location:	2' (two feet) onto State Lease #0009179, located on Section 18, T30N R20W (Lease #0009179 further described as "a tract in the NE1/4SW1/4 beginning at the NE corner of the SW1/4, thence east 460 feet, then North 700 ft, to point of beginning.")
County:	

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Flathead Electric Cooperative is requesting that DNRC grant authorization for a utility easement to extend approximately 2' (two feet) onto State Lease #0009179 for the purpose of securing a guy and anchor that extends 6' (six feet) from a power pole located outside the boundary of said leasehold. The power pole's location is necessarily sited where it is in order to provide for safe and proper tension where an upgraded power line installed to support previously approved nearby development will cross a public roadway.

The proposed utility easement would encumber approximately .001 acre of state land and would generate $100 for the Trust. The anchor installation will be composed of a sub-surface plate approximately 20" x 20" , and a 5/8" in diameter 8' long rod will be extended from the surface through the anchor plate and down to a depth of approximately eight feet. A small area will be excavated by backhoe to provide for the installation of the anchor. The guy wire will be stretched to connect the anchor to the power pole (which is located off the site of this proposed easement).

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The Lessee of State Lease #0009179 (Columbia Falls Baseball Association) was contacted to review the proposed anchor/guywire site and approved of its location and installation. The Columbia Falls Baseball Association indicated that no damages were anticipated during the Settlement of Damages processes.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

Not Applicable.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No Action: Decline the easement application.
Action: Approve the easement and installation as proposed.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

No measurable impact is anticipated (See Exhibit A).

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

No measurable impact is anticipated (See Exhibit A).

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

No measurable impact is anticipated

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

A minor and temporary disturbance of vegetation (grasses) will occur when the anchor area is excavated; reseeding the area should mitigate this impact.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

No measurable impact is anticipated (See Exhibit B.)

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

No measurable impact is anticipated (See Exhibit B).

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No cultural resource concerns for this project, per personal communication with Patrick Rennie, DNRC archeologist.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

No measurable impact is anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No measurable impact is anticipated.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

Not Applicable.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The Action Alternative supports improved safety in the area in that the guy wire/anchor installation would support a power pole which will be sited to insure that an improved power line can be strung at safe and proper tension where it crosses a public roadway. (The improved power line is a primary overhead line replacing a secondary overhead line to serve the development previously approved for a contiguous area.)

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The installation will support a larger project located north of the subject property, wherein a secondary overhead power line has been deemed insufficient to serve nearby approved development and the line is thus being upgraded to a primary overhead line, which will supply power to serve an approved subdivision and two existing homesites.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

No measurable impact is anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

No measurable timpact is anticipated.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

No measurable impact is anticipated.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

Compliance with a utility plan designed to serve approved development would occur.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

No measurable impact is anticipated.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

The guy wire and anchor will support improved utilities to development already approved through a public process.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

No measurable impact is anticipated.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

No measurable impact is anticipated.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

No measurable impact is anticipated.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Anne Shaw Moran	**Date:** March 27, 2009	
	Title: Planner, Kalispell Unit DNRC		

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

The Action Alternative (i.e., grant authorization to install the anchor/guy wire).

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I find that none of the project impacts are regarded as severe, enduring, geographically widespread, or frequent. Further, I find that the quantity and quality of the natural resources, including any that may be considered unique or fragile, will not be adversely affected to a significant degree. I find no precedent for future actions that would cause significant impacts, and I find no conflict with local, State, or Federal laws, requirements, or formal plans. In summary, I find that adverse impacts will be avoided, controlled, or mitigated by the design of the project to an extent that they are not significant.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:** Greg Poncin	
	Title: Kalispell Unit Manager	
Signature:		**Date:**

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

No measurable impact is anticipated.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:**	Anne Shaw Moran	**Date:**	March 27, 2009
	Title:	Planner, Kalispell Unit DNRC		

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EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Greg Poncin		
	Title:	Kalispell Unit Manager		
Signature:	Greg Poncin		**Date:**	3/30/09

EXHIBIT A

To: Anne Moran, Project Leader

From: Tony Nelson, Hydrologist

Date: March 30, 2009

Subject: FEC Guy Wire and Anchor

The proposed project is a request for a utility easement to extend approximately 2' (two feet) onto an existing State Lease to install a guy and anchor that extends 6' (six feet) from a power pole located outside the boundary of the Lease area. All work would be completed under dry, frozen and/or snow covered ground conditions.

The following table evaluates the potential impacts to soil, water and fisheries resources in the project area.

Issue	Assessment
High erosion risk soils?	The inventoried soil type in the project area is listed as Mires gravelly loam by *Upper Flathead Valley Area, Montana (MT617)*. This is not considered as a highly erosive soil. Frozen or dry conditions will limit the risk of compaction.
Federally listed threatened and endangered *aquatic* species or critical habitat for threatened and endangered *aquatic* species as designated by the USFWS?	No surface water bodies exist within 300 feet of the proposed project, so no measurable impacts to water quality or aquatic habitat are expected.
Within a municipal watershed?	No portion of the proposed project is within a municipal water supply. Due to the size of the project and the location away from surface water sources, only a very low risk of impacts would exist.
SMZ of fish bearing streams or lakes…?	No surface water bodies exist within 300 feet of the proposed project, so no measurable impacts to water quality or aquatic habitat are expected.
Cumulative effects?	Due to the small scale of this project in relation to the watershed size, the risk of additional cumulative impacts would be very low and likely immeasurable. Therefore, cumulative impacts would remain acceptable for this watershed.

Conclusion:

Due to the small scope of the project, distance from surface water bodies, and the gentle to level topography, impacts to watershed, soils and fisheries are not expected to be measurable.

EXHIBIT B

Memorandum

To: Anne Moran, Project Leader

CC: Tony Nelson

From: Katie Mally, Wildlife Biologist

Date: 3/30/2009

Re: Flathead Electric Cooperative 1785 Talbot Road Guy Wire Project -wildlife comments

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The proposed utility easement in the Kalispell unit would occur in Section 18, T30N, R20W. The utility easement would extend approximately two feet onto state lease #0009179.

The following table shows how each Threatened species, Endangered species, sensitive species, or big game was either reviewed with anticipated effects of the proposal or dismissed because suitable habitat does not occur within the project area or proposed activities would not affect their required habitat components.

STATUS	SPECIES	DETERMINATION – BASIS
Endangered Species	Gray wolf Habitat: ample big game pops., security from human activity	No further analysis conducted – The proposed project area is over 7 miles away from the Firefighter wolf pack and separated by considerable amounts of unsuitable habitats. Big game species are the primary prey for wolves, and no changes to big game or their habitats would be anticipated. No wolf den or rendezvous sites are known to occur in the vicinity; standard contract stipulations would address the potential of these habitat attributes occurring in the vicinity. Due to the, lack of known habitat attributes, no changes to big game habitats and inclusion of mitigation clauses in the contract, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wolves would be anticipated.
Threatened Species	Canada lynx Habitat: SF hab. types, dense sapling, old forest, deep snow zone	No further analysis conducted – No lynx habitats occur in the project area. Additionally, the project area is generally outside of the elevations where lynx are located in Montana. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated to lynx.
	Grizzly bear Habitat: recovery areas, security from human activity	No further analysis conducted – The proposed project area is over 2 air miles from "occupied habitat" as mapped by grizzly bear researchers and managers to address increased sightings and encounters of grizzly bears in habitats outside of recovery zones (T. Wittinger, Unpub. Interagency Map) and separated from this area by the rural community of Columbia Falls. No use would be anticipated. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effect to grizzly bears would be anticipated.
Sensitive species	Bald eagle Habitat: late-successional forest <1 mile from open water	No further analysis conducted – The proposed project area is over 7 air miles from the nearest known Bald Eagle nest. There are no preferred nesting or foraging habitats within the project area. Given the distance from the nearest known nest, habitats present, and proximity to human developments, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to bald eagles would be anticipated.
	Black-backed woodpecker Habitat: mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	No further analysis conducted – No recently (less than 5 years) burned areas are in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect or cumulative effects would be expected.

	Coeur d'Alene salamander Habitat: waterfall spray zones, talus near cascading streams	No further analysis conducted – No moist talus or streamside talus habitat occurs in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be expected.
	Columbian sharp-tailed grouse Habitat: grassland, shrubland, riparian, agriculture	No further analysis conducted – No suitable grassland communities occur in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be expected.
	Common loon Habitat: cold mountain lakes, nest in emergent vegetation	No further analysis conducted – No lakes occur in or near the project area. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be expected.
	Fisher Habitat: dense mature to old forest <6,000 ft. elev. and riparian	No further analysis conducted – No suitable fisher habitats exist in the area. Given the habitats present, the limited area, and the proximity to human developments, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated.
	Flammulated owl Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and Doug.-fir forest	No further analysis conducted – No suitable flammulated owl habitats exist within the project area. The project area is surrounded by the rural community of Columbia Falls and thus devoid of suitable flammulated owl habitats. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be expected.
	Harlequin duck Habitat: white-water streams, boulder and cobble substrates	No further analysis conducted – No suitable high gradient streams occur in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be expected.
	Northern bog lemming Habitat: sphagnum meadows, bogs, fens with thick moss mats	No further analysis conducted – No suitable sphagnum bogs or fens occur in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be expected.
	Peregrine Falcon Habitat: cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	No further analysis conducted – No potential habitat is expected in the project area. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be expected.
	Pileated woodpecker Habitat: late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest	No further analysis conducted – No suitable pileated woodpecker habitats exist within the project area. The project area is surrounded by the rural community of Columbia Falls and thus devoid of suitable pileated woodpecker habitats. Thus no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be expected.
	Townsend's big-eared bat Habitat: caves, caverns, old mines	No further analysis conducted – DNRC is unaware of any mines or caves in the project area or close vicinity that would be suitable for use by Townsend's big-eared bats. Thus, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would be anticipated.
Big Game Species	Elk	No further analysis conducted–. No big game winter range or security habitat exists in the project area, and no hiding cover exists. Given the surrounding human densities and infrastructure little to no big game use would be expected within the project area. Thus, minor direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to big game would be anticipated.
	Moose	
	Mule Deer	
	White-tailed Deer	

Mitigations to include:

1. Cease all operations if a threatened or endangered species is encountered. Consult a DNRC biologist and develop additional mitigations that are consistent with the administrative rules for managing Threatened and Endangered Species (ARM 36.11.428 through 36.11.435).

Conclusion:

In general, with the identified mitigations, the potential for effects to threatened and endangered species is relatively low and overall negligible effects to wildlife would be anticipated.